UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/51/372
18 September 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-first session
Item 87 of the provisional agenda*

QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Letter dated 17 September 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Final Declaration of the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Abuja, Nigeria, from 3 to 6 September 1996 (see annex).

I wish to request you to kindly arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 87 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Ibrahim A. GAMBARI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Final Declaration of the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Abuja, Nigeria, from 3 to 6 September 1996

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries met at Abuja, Nigeria, in September 1996 to appraise the implementation of decisions adopted at the Fourth Conference of Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Pyongyang in June 1993, and the Eleventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Cartagena, Colombia in October 1995, and to discuss new strategies for future activities.

II. CURRENT WORLD SITUATION IN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

2. The Ministers reviewed the global trend in information and communication and agreed that developed countries were employing their media to disseminate false and distorted information of events taking place in developing countries.

3. The Ministers noted with concern the following measures that impede normal development in the field of information and communication in non-aligned countries:

(a) The unbalanced global economic situation;

(b) The use of the technological superiority of the West against non-aligned countries;

(c) The use of unilateral coercive measures that violate international law and the Charter of the United Nations against non-aligned countries.

4. The Ministers noted the enormous cost and rapid changes in information and communication technology, which presently outpace the rate of acquisition and utilization of such communication equipment by developing countries, thus posing immense financial and technical difficulties and increasing the information and communication gap between developed and developing countries and their dependence on external broadcast and information. They agreed on the need for intensive research efforts by non-aligned countries into the development of communication technology and inter- and intra-regional cooperation as a means of redressing the imbalance through an enhanced outflow of information from developing countries.

5. The Ministers appraised performances of non-aligned countries in the realm of information and communication against the background of the resolutions adopted and the efforts made since the Fourth Conference and subsequent meetings. They acknowledged the increased efforts being made by some non-aligned and other developing countries to develop their information and communication networks.

6. The Ministers recognized the need for more dynamic action and resilience on the part of Governments of the non-aligned countries, stressing that investments made in information and communication are of paramount national interest and mutual benefit to member nations. In this regard they called for an increase in cooperation among non-aligned countries in this field and for the adequate structuring of the mechanism of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries geared to this end.

III. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER

7. The Ministers agreed that the struggle for the new world information and communication order should be intensified in spite of the end of the cold war, since the challenges and realities that informed the call for the order were still prevalent.

8. The Ministers noted the continued imbalances and inequalities in the field of international information and communication. They highlighted the serious implications that the negative situation portended for non-aligned countries and stressed the urgent need to establish a new world information and communication order on the basis of the principles of independence, progress, democracy and mutual cooperation.

9. The Ministers observed that the long history of the efforts for a new world information and communication order notwithstanding, the salient objectives were yet to be realized. They expressed concern that developing nations were still impoverished, not only materially and economically, but in terms of equitable endowments and opportunities in the field of global information and communication.

10. The Ministers stressed the need for South-South cooperation for the attainment of the collective objective of redressing present imbalances in the world information and communication order. Towards that end, they resolved seriously to consider fresh policy options in order to give proper effect to the segments of the Final Declaration of the Fourth Conference, held at Pyongyang, dealing with South-South cooperation as a key element in increasing information capabilities at the national, regional and global levels.

11. The Ministers agreed to reduce dependence on the information and cultural media of the industrialized nations by initiating and supporting cooperative activities through fresh and dynamic approaches to programming, message content and networking in the media systems of non-aligned and other developing countries.

12. The Ministers called for increased investments in human and material resources in the area of information and communication. They equally expressed support for the incorporation of development journalism in the curricula of training institutions of developing nations to awaken in media practitioners the consciousness and zeal to serve the interests of member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and other developing countries.

13. The Ministers emphasized the need for information and communication strategies to be rooted in deep historical and cultural processes, and urged that the views, models and perspectives of the media of developed countries not be allowed to determine to an undue extent the style and orientation of media policies in developing countries. In that context the Ministers considered of utmost importance the reactivation of the concept of the new world information and communication order and pledged to promote it both in the United Nations and in other international conferences, including those of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

14. Expressing concern over the sustained, biased and distorted Western media reporting on non-aligned countries, the Ministers noted the relentless efforts of the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool (NANAP), the Broadcasting Organizations of Non-Aligned Countries (BONAC) and other regional media organizations to combat the threat.

15. The Ministers stressed the need to coordinate the activities of national focal points of the non-aligned countries at the regional level with a view to strengthening the activities of NANAP and BONAC and to enhance their efficiency, and thus to accelerate the process of establishing the new world information and communication order.

IV. COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION AMONG NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES

Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool

16. The Ministers noted the commitment of NANAP to the common ideals and aspirations of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

17. The Ministers acknowledged the sustained determination of NANAP to facilitate the concerted objective of non-aligned member States and other developing countries to break the present monopoly of the international information system, and thereby boost the development process of member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

18. The Ministers noted with satisfaction NANAP's pursuance of the common objective of the Movement within the context of the current political and economic situation in the world.

19. The Ministers also noted with satisfaction the efforts made by NANAP during the last four years under the active chairmanship of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) and stressed the need for further cooperation of NANAP member agencies within both bilateral and multilateral frameworks to increase the quality and quantity of news exchange and experience among the members.

Broadcasting Organizations of Non-Aligned Countries

20. The Ministers reaffirmed their belief in the potency of BONAC as an effective medium for transmitting factual news of events of the developing countries to the world. Accordingly, they acknowledged the need to reposition and revitalize BONAC in order to enable it to attain its primary goals and objectives.

21. Towards that end the Ministers urged greater cooperation and interrelationship among broadcasting organizations of member countries in a manner that would provide BONAC with the required support for the effective prosecution of its mandate.

22. The Ministers stressed that BONAC must not be allowed to experience any impediment and advised it to endeavour to work harder and avail member countries of effective operational and technical strategies to enhance their functions. In addition, it mandated the Technical Committee to undertake a detailed assessment of BONAC and to make recommendations to the Conference on how to optimize its services.

23. The Ministers urged that the Fourth BONAC General Conference be convened as early as possible in order to reactivate BONAC.

24. The Ministers acknowledged the role of private broadcasting in modern public information and communication processes and agreed that private practitioners should be encouraged, as a complement to efforts of government agencies.

International information centres of non-aligned countries

25. The Ministers noted that the Fourth Conference of Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Pyongyang in June 1993, had recommended the setting up of new international information centres on different continents to promote South-South cooperation in the field of information and communication based on the principle of collective self-reliance. They further noted that the Eleventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Cartagena, Colombia, in October 1995, had called for accelerating the process of setting up the new international information centres of non-aligned countries.

26. The Ministers stressed that the setting up of the new international information centres would promote inter- and intra-regional cooperation in the field of information and communication in conformity with the trend of regionalization of South-South cooperation and thus contribute practically to the revitalization of information and communication organizations existing in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and, in the long run, to the establishment of an equitable new world information and communication order.

27. The Ministers also agreed that the centres should not be competitive, but should complement and reinforce existing information structures and organizations such as NANAP and BONAC.

27 (b) The Ministers urged the non-aligned countries to accelerate the process of setting up the new international information centres, bearing in mind that it was not intended that the centres should overlap or duplicate the functions of the existing institutions.

V. LONG-TERM PROJECTION ON THE USE AND APPLICATION OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY BY MASS MEDIA IN NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES

28. The Ministers restated their commitment to the application of modern technologies in communication as an imperative requirement for national and regional communication organizations in a bid to bridge the prevailing gap between developed and developing nations.

29. The Ministers were gratified that modern communication structures were being developed in member countries of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which would serve as the bedrock for the development of a concerted information and communication network for the Movement.

30. The Ministers therefore stressed the urgency of cataloguing the status of telecommunications facilities and technologies in non-aligned countries.

31. The Ministers agreed on the need for both bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the areas of telecommunication and mass media and noted the offer made by Egypt to assist member countries wishing to profit from its satellite and information network programmes.

32. The Ministers reiterated the importance of retraining of personnel as vital in the use of modern technologies and advocated greater cooperation in the exchange of experiences gained in the development of modern technologies by mass media in the developing countries.

VI. GENERAL STATEMENT

33. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of disseminating information with respect to sovereignty and self-determination and denounced all forms of domination and subjugation, notably colonialism, aggression, terrorism, economic blockade and interference against member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. They urged the mass media of non-aligned countries to disseminate information on the activities and functions of the Movement in order to encourage efforts and cooperation among the non-aligned and other developing countries for South-South cooperation on the principle of collective self-reliance.

34. The Ministers of Information of non-aligned countries recalled the relevant decisions taken in non-aligned forums and United Nations resolutions and the Geneva Convention of 1949, and:

(a) Reaffirmed the unequivocal condemnation of any political, diplomatic, moral, material or information support to terrorism, as specified in

paragraph 116 of the final document of the Cartagena Conference of the Heads of State and Government of Non-Aligned Countries.

(b) Urged member States to accelerate the implementation of the Lusaka Accord on Angola and called upon the international community to provide the pledged funds on a predictable and timely basis;

(b)(i) Recalling the statement made by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on 23 August 1996 (NOAL/0733/F) and the communiqué issued by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Movement in the Methodology Committee (Cartagena, May 1996) on the extraterritorial application of domestic laws against the international community, the Ministers reaffirmed that the enactment of such legislation is a blatant violation against the inalienable sovereignty of all States;

(c) Called upon the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial measures that intensify the embargo against Cuba. They also urged the Government of the United States to put an end to aggressive radio and TV transmission against Cuba;

(d) Called for the withdrawal of foreign troops and settlers and reiterated their solidarity and support for the people and the Government of Cyprus. They also reiterated their support for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of that country;

(e) Backed efforts aimed at disseminating information about efforts of the Korean people for the reunification of their country based on the three principles of independence, peaceful reunification and greater national unity;

(f) Took note of the statements made by Iraq, and other member States regarding the recent United States attacks on Iraq and expressed their deep concern over the adverse effect they are likely to have on peace and security in the region, and further expressed their support for Iraq;

(g) Expressed their solidarity with the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and called upon the other countries concerned to respond positively to the initiatives calling for dialogue and negotiations that would lead to an acceptable solution for the parties;

(h) Reaffirmed their support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people under the leadership of its sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to secure their inalienable rights to self-determination and independence, and reiterated their demand for the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Palestinian and other Arab lands, including Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights, to the 4 June 1967 line, and from southern Lebanon based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978); a/

(i) Stressed that it is important to spread information on the successful conclusion and implementation activities of regional organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the

Constitutive Agreement of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the League of Arab States (LAS);

(j) Called for the dissemination of information on the role of the Association of South-East Asian Nations in maintaining peace, stability and prosperity in their region as well as enhancing cooperation in the wider Asia-Pacific region. They also emphasized the need to disseminate information on the progress being made in ASEAN's continued endeavour to achieve the zone of peace, freedom and neutrality in South-East Asia and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region;

(k) Supported the efforts of the leaders of the Economic Community of West African States aimed at bringing peace and security to Liberia and called on the international community to honour its pledges to provide financial and material support in order to accelerate the process of disarmament and eventual return of peace in Liberia;

(l) Noting the importance of historical artifacts in the life of nations, which are considered as an essential part of their people's recollections, the Fifth Conference reviewed thoroughly the programmed operation of usurping of these historical artifacts and treasures of the ancient civilizations of member countries by the countries of the North during the colonial era and the continuous efforts made individually and collectively by concerned countries of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to regain the usurped antiquities and priceless treasures and welcomed a suggestion by the delegation of Iraq to set up a follow-up committee of experts of the countries concerned to prepare a detailed study and a comprehensive planning, taking into consideration the legal procedures possible to regain artefacts through the International Court of Justice in The Hague or through the United Nations General Assembly.

Notes

a/ On paragraph 34 (h) above, the Islamic Republic of Iran submitted a reservation as follows:

> "The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran expresses its reservation regarding paragraph 34 (h) of the Final Declaration of the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries on the so-called peace process in the Middle East, which is not in conformity with the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy on this issue.
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> "This policy, which has been reiterated in detail, is based on a just and durable peace in the Middle East based on the restoration of usurped rights of the Palestinians. The reservation also refers to any part of the above-mentioned paragraph which may be construed as a recognition of Israel."